



Randolph County Historic Landmark Preservation Commission

204 East Academy St. ♦ P.O. Box 771 ♦ Asheboro, North Carolina 27204

September 24, 2008

The Randolph County Historic Landmark Preservation Commission (HLPC) met in the County Commissioners Meeting Room of the County Office Building at 725 McDowell Road, Asheboro, NC, and the meeting was called to order at 2:00 p.m.

Chairman Johnson welcomed everyone, called the meeting to order and opened with roll call. Members present were Hal Johnson, Fran Andrews, Bill Johnson, Warren Dixon, Lynne Qualls, and Robyn Hankins. Robby Davis was absent. The Chairman stated that Mac Whatley was tied up in court and would join the meeting later, and that Donna Hall had resigned due to sickness in her family.

Approval of Minutes from August 27, 2008 Meeting

On a motion of Andrews, seconded by Dixon, the Commission voted unanimously to approve the minutes of the regular meeting of August 27, 2008, as presented.

Update on the Establishment of a Historic Landmark Preservation Commission Website

Chairman Johnson introduced Annette Crotts and Tom Wassack from the Randolph County Information Technology department.

Ms. Crotts addressed the Commission and affirmed that a website could be established on the County system if it is kept simple and usable by citizens without regard to their type of Internet connection. She suggested listing only items or details of most importance, limiting pictures and their size due to the time it takes a user to download those and using links to other sites that would have more detailed information. To get the site started, Ms. Crotts stated that her department could post the application and its requirements as well as the Historic Landmark Preservation Commission Ordinance, which contains the rules and regulations under which the Commission operates.

Ms. Crotts then asked the Commission for their thoughts of what they are considering and envision for the website. Chairman Johnson suggested maps with clickable icons that would give directions to or more information about the landmark. Ms. Qualls requested links to other sites for citizens to do background history for their application process. If those links are supplied to the Information Technology department, Ms. Crotts stated they can be linked. Mr. Dixon suggested a list of physical locations, which do not have a website, for a citizen to do research. Ms. Crotts also suggested a "Frequently Asked Questions" section that could summarize or directly answer a question quickly and asked the Commission to create a list of questions they feel will be most asked. Mr. Ivey stated that the site should be able to help a citizen determine if they have a qualifying site before an application is submitted. Mr. Bill Johnson suggested working with the Tourism Development Authority and the Asheboro/Randolph Chamber of Commerce to have them link to this new site. Chairman Johnson questioned the time frame of seeing a website and Ms. Crotts responded that it could happen as soon as 60 days with just basic information. She stated it would be an ongoing site building project, with the Planning department assisting in maintaining the site, as designations are added.

Update on the Status of the Inter-local Agreements Being Considered by Local Municipalities

Chairman Johnson said that Asheboro, Ramseur, Liberty and Trinity have each approved their inter-local agreement. He stated that it is a vote of confidence and support by the municipalities, and that it is a real opportunity for Randolph County and historical preservation.

Update on the RCC Design Support

Chairman Johnson introduced Caroline Reid and Andre Rodriguez from the RCC Advertising and Design program. Chairman Johnson had previously spoken with President Bob Shackleford and Program Instructor Susan Shaw who were excited to be a part of this process of potentially creating a design that would be used to mark designations of historical value and could represent Randolph County and /or a specific municipality. Ms. Reid thanked the Commission for the opportunity to be involved.

Examples and Costs of Landmark Signs to Consider for Designated Properties

Chairman Johnson presented examples of a sign marker and its gauge of metal that could be produced by the County sign department. The actual sign could possibly be 16" x 24" in size. He also provided photo copies of that particular sign marker and a potential building marker for the Commission to think about. At the next meeting, the Commission will discuss what they would like to see on the markers, how much information it will contain, and if it will have a County and/or City seal along with the potential new historic landmark logo.

Discussion of Application Fees

Chairman Johnson said he had researched the fees from around the state and found that they vary. Some do not charge a fee, and some run in excess of \$225 per application. Chairman Johnson recommended a fee of \$125 for Randolph County and stated the fee would cover the cost of legal advertising and standard signage. Signage approved by the Commission in excess of the standard sign would be charged to the applicant. Mr. Ivey questioned why it would ever be in excess. Chairman Johnson explained that the requestor may prefer signage with additional historical information pertaining to the site and it would be larger, more expensive and could be of a different material. He affirmed that fees would be waived for landmark designations requested by the Commission or a governing board; however, cost of signage in excess of standard shall be the responsibility of the local government.

Ms. Andrews asked if a fee should be refunded if a designation is denied. Mr. Ivey proposed to return \$75 if a request is denied after a public hearing and, if it is denied before a hearing, they would get a full refund. Ms. Qualls suggested simplicity and standardization with denials. Chairman Johnson will discuss potential denial refunds with his staff, keeping in mind the staff time involved in the application process. He will bring that information back to the Commission to determine whether a fee can be refunded.

Request from the Randolph County Commissioners

Randolph County Board of Commissioners Chairman Harold Holmes thanked the members for their willingness to serve on the Historic Landmark Preservation Commission. He then requested that the 1909 Randolph County Courthouse be the first historical landmark designated in Randolph County. Chairman Holmes then asked County Manager Richard Wells to make some comments.

Mr. Wells stated everyone present in the meeting has had "some sort of tie" to the old courthouse which is actually the seventh Randolph County Courthouse. He then summarized some history about the courthouse from Mr. Whatley's book, Architectural History of Randolph County, N.C., and information from other historical sources, as follows:

- In 1907 the Commissioners began to consider building a larger, more convenient building that could house County offices.
- In June of 1908 they voted to build a new one. The Iredell County Courthouse was widely admired and their plans were used, with a few alterations to cut expenses.
- In 1909, it was finished.

- It was the center of activity for the county from 1909 until 2002.
- In the early 1990's the building was restored to continue its use. The outside got a fresh coat of paint where needed, and the leaking roof was repaired while the eighth courthouse was under construction.

When the eighth was completed the old one was then closed. Recently the Board of Commissioners approved funding from timber sales revenues for renovations at the historic Courthouse. Mr. Wells said that countywide construction has decreased drastically due to the slow economy. Rather than laying off our highly skilled and trained building inspectors, their skills and expertise could be better utilized by doing much of the interior renovations themselves and at the same time, saving the taxpayers money. Work commenced in late summer. Renovations include raising the "drop down" ceilings back up to reveal the arched windows that had been hidden since the last renovation. Old, damaged plaster walls will be covered with sheetrock, damaged woodwork will be repaired and electrical systems brought to current State codes. He explained that this endeavor would be a renovation rather than a restoration to save money. Also, this designation by the HLPC will be the first step in applying for grants to assist with renovation costs. Mr. Wells agreed with Mr. Whatley's statement in his book that the 1909 courthouse was the "most important architectural possession" of Randolph County and Asheboro and stated that it would be a viable and usable building again.

Mr. Johnson then mentioned the newest book on Randolph County history by Barron Mills, and found it interesting that Asheboro was created so Randolph County had a county seat.

Mr. Whatley entered the meeting at this time.

Ms. Andrews asked Mr. Wells what the building would be used for upon completion.

- Mr. Wells replied that the main floor would remain as offices and that the Tourism Development Authority and the Economic Development Corporation have right of first refusal to offices there.
- Congressman Howard Coble has expressed interest in relocating to the building as well, but will make a decision after the election.
- The basement has a fairly new boiler system for heating the building, and the basement will be cleaned, painted and used for storage.
- By using the current sources of labor, the renovations are moving slowly, but in turn, the County is saving money.
- The upstairs courtroom could be usable within a year.
- On prior discussions of using the courtroom as a public meeting room or a museum, no decisions have been made. Inspectors discovered that the glass was left in the windows that were bricked up from the outside when the annex was added on. Masons have been discussing the possibility of and giving estimates for removing the bricks in hopes of not damaging the glass. The old wood paneling would probably be replaced with sheetrock.
- Another timber sale has been planned to budget for more of the work.
- The hallways on the main floor are wide enough to allow for display cases to showcase items of historical value. Many items are presently being displayed or stored in the Randolph Room of the Public Library.

Mr. Whatley asked about the use of the existing two-person elevator. Mr. Wells explained that the County had continued to have it inspected annually to keep its certification so that it could remain usable for when the Courthouse was renovated. He explained that it is very difficult to reinstate an older elevator once use has discontinued. Mr. Wells also explained the addition of a metal porch, at the entrance on the right side of the building, which would include an exterior handicap elevator.

Mr. Whatley also asked who is making the decision on what is architecturally historic and should be kept in place, if possible. Mr. Wells stated that he was listed as the project manager and had been reviewing work before it is done.

Mr. Ivey questioned the removal of the walnut paneling in the courtroom and asked if it could not be saved in order to possibly save some money. Mr. Wells explained that the wood has begun to peel and was in bad shape and that restoration could cost more than replacing with sheetrock.

Mr. Wells further explained that the walls that closed off the former balcony over the courtroom would be removed, and no decision has been made yet about whether to remove the dropped ceiling panels to reveal the original ornate, tin ceiling. Mr. Whatley stated that he had been up there and there should be panels in the balcony that could be moved to the main area to replace ones that are missing.

With no further questions, Chairman Johnson asked the Commission for a motion.

On a motion of Ivey, seconded by Whatley, the Commission voted unanimously to begin the process to consider the 1909 Randolph County Courthouse as the first Historic Landmark designation in Randolph County.

Mr. Wells thanked the Commission and stated that upon results of research, he had found that the US Department of the Interior has money for renovations and restorations of courthouses and with this designation, the Randolph County Board of Commissioners would consider applying for the grant.

Prioritize the Compiled List of Suggested Landmark Designations

After a discussion, the Commission members agreed to review their requested historical designation list and based on priority, then bring one recommendation and an alternate to the next meeting. Chairman Johnson stated that having several designations in process at one time is more efficient for the members and less costly to the Commission because one legal ad would cover multiple designation requests.

Mr. Johnson stated that although the courthouse is owned by Randolph County, it is located within the Asheboro city limits, and they will have the final approval on this designation. He then affirmed that the county planning department staff will file the official paperwork with the State and be working with the City of Asheboro's planning staff to coordinate the next processes for the designation of the Randolph County Courthouse. He will have an update on the progress at the next meeting.

Chairman Johnson reminded the Commission members that the October 22 meeting will be in the Training Room due to a conflict in the Commissioner's Meeting Room.

Adjournment

On a motion of Whatley, seconded by Andrews, the commission voted unanimously to adjourn at 3:25 p.m.

Hal Johnson, Chairman

Amanda W. Varner, Deputy Clerk
Randolph County Board of Commissioners